DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 203 502 EA 013 694

AUTHOR Foster, William P.
TITLE Organizational Frame Analysis: A Case Study.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 37p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Los Angeles, CA, April 13-17, 1981).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Board of Education Role: Compliance (Legal): Court Litigation: Court Role: Decision Making: Desegregation Plans: Elementary Secondary Education: *Group Dynamics: Organizational Communication: *Organizational Theories: Power Structure: School Desegregation: *School District Reorganization
IDENTIFIERS *Organizational Analysis: *Organizational Frames

ABSTRACT

Organizational frame analysis may provide a useful alternative to traditional organizational theory, which focuses on organizations as goal-meeting structures. According to Elkind, "frames are the set of implicit rules, expectancies, and understandings that regulate social behavior in repetitive situations." While frames are normally conceived of as affecting individuals' role perceptions and actions, expectations also exist regarding the behavior of organizations. The organizational trauma surrounding a court-ordered desegregation plan involving the consolidation of eleven urban and suburban school districts into one larger district provided data for a case study of organizational framing processes. The study showed that the various parties involved in the decision-making process tended to be caught in their own "framing" of events, resulting in frame ambiguity and frame conflict. (Author/PGD)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED203502

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

# ORGANIZATIONAL FRAME ANALYSIS:

# A CASE STUDY

A Paper Presented at the

ANNUAL MEETING

AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

LOS ANGELES

April, 1981

William P. Foster

College of Education

University of Delaware

Newark, Delaware 19711

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

W. P. Foster

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EA 013 694

## I. Introduction

One of the underlying drives of modern organizational theorists has been to discover organizational rules which are both clear and absolute, in the sense of developing scientific principles predictive of organizational functioning. The organization tended to be conceived of as a "thing" out there, a thing which required objective prodding and dissecting by a brigade of theorists. One of the major efforts lay in the attempt to quantify organizational phenomena, an attempt which tended to engender charges of triviality being brought against the organizational scientists.

According to one theorist, the unhappy result of the particular organizational model in use is that it has resulted in a crisis in organizational theorizing (Benson, 1979, p. 5). Benson argues that the orthodox religion in organizational analysis has been the worship of the "rational model," a model which purports to explain organizational realities in terms of formalist, rationalistic properties. This rational model is the underlying idea in structural views of the organization, where, for example, establishing rules of operation represents an internal, goal-seeking logic and in psychological views, where, for example, data on informal groupings serve as mechanisms for furthering the formal aims and goals of the administration.

Etzioni (1964, p. 4) subscribes to this model in his structural position when he finds that organizations are "planned units, deliberately structured for the purpose of attaining specific goals..." Blau and Scott (1962, p. 5) similarly observe that "If the accomplishment of an objective requires collective effort, men set up an organization designed to coordinate the activities of many persons and to furnish incentives for others to join them for this purpose," a statement

echoing the rationalistic perspective. Miner (1971, p. 16) suggests three components to a definition of "organization": organizational goals, division of labor, and a power center. Herbert Simon (1957, p. 220) finds that "organization behavior is a complex network of decisional processes...," ones which, if not ideally rational, are satisfactorily rational. Katz and Kahn, interested in the social psychology of the organization, have indeed noted (1966, p. 16) that orthodox theory assumes that "an organization is a social device for efficiently accomplishing through group means some stated purpose" and go on to critique this mechanistic approach. Yet, a structural-functional conception underlies even their notion of organization. They also stress the goal-seeking nature of organization.

This model has been a pervasive one, yet yields both dissatisfaction and attempts to re-conceive organizational theorizing and model-building: "The orthodox stance has been challenged in recent years by a number of developments" (Benson, 1979, p. 7). While we will briefly review some of these, it should be said that many of the reactions to the orthodox model seem to have their origin in the logical and empirical difficulties of doing positive science in a verstehen world. This occurs on at least two levels. On one level, there appears to be a logical difficulty in developing a scientific terminology whose latent level of meaning is contained in ordinary language. Organizational constructs depend on common language to provide scientific validity: if the participants in the organizational world do not accept the meaning given, then the scientific description itself becomes meaningless. Thus, the social-scientific concept of "role prescription" depends not on finding prescribed roles regardless of the members' knowledge of roles but <u>because</u> of members' knowledge, (see Turner, 1979, pp. 27-33).

On another level, the problem revolves around the issue of attempting to develop a-historical and a-cultural predictive power over organizations, so that generalizations and laws may emerge. The very nature of the goal itself may be questioned because it views "science" as the sole truth-giving system rather than as one such system. Although sparked in part by Kuhn's (1967) notions on scientific revolutions, the issue is located further in the debate about the nature of science and its relation to natural phenomena.

As a result of this debate, there has been a distinct shift in the conceptual views taken by many contemporary organizational thinkers. Benson (1979), for example, suggests we ask questions located around problems in the theory: problem of action, or how are organizational realities constructed by the participants?; the problem of power, or how is power allocated, distributed and produced?; the problem of levels, or what are the boundaries of the entity we call an organization and what are the boundaries of our theorizing about this entity?; and the problem of process, or how does the basic structure of organizations change? These problems, he shows, have either been addressed only briefly or have been taken for granted in normal organizational theory. Another leading theorist, March, has begun to examine conceptions of decision-making in organizations and seems to endorse the virtues of "sensible foolishness" (1976, ch. 5) as an antidote to the strict construction of goal-seeking behavior in organizations. Finally, as Perrow (1979) points out, there are a number of new and different approaches and perspectives in the field, each of which may openly or tacitly reject the static goal-seeking paradigm. The population-ecology approach (Hannan & Freedman, 1977; Aldrich, 1979) ascribes organizational success to chance as

much as to human intervention; the phenomenological school (Silverman, 1971) asks a different set of questions, and the neo-Marxist approach (Heydebrand, 1979) issues a conceptually distinct framework for considering organizations. Child's work (1972) could also be seen as a contribution to what Emershein (1979) discusses as paradigm shifts in organizations.

In summary, organizational theory has enjoyed a renascence sparked by the emergence of new thoughts and even fields in the broader discipline of sociology. This input of intellectual vigor allows organizations to be viewed from different perspectives, with different methods and for different reasons. This paper is an attempt to take one of these different perspectives and to use it in an attempt to analyze the reactions of organizations to changes caused by their external environment, in this case, a court order. The preceding discussion of developments in the theory in a sense justify this departure from a normal analysis and allows us to present what in effect are a series of hypotheses about how a particular organizational attempts to maintain its self-identity in a period of crisis.

Foundations of Organizational Frame Analysis

By framing, we mean that an individual develops a certain perspective and sets of rules and expectations about situations: a cognitive "frame" is put around that individual's behavior and, until challenged, is used as the means for interpreting what would otherwise be a series of confusing and contradictory messages about the world. The analysis, of course, lies in the act of probing into and dismantling these frames. The thesis which will be used here is that organizations themselves adopt what can be thought of as a frame -- a prescribed way of reacting to the world (see Foster, 1980). These frames are developed by individ-

uals in the organization, but yet are more than the sum of the individual parts; they indeed take on a life of their own. The "life" of an organization lies outside of the formal rules and statements and analysis of only the formal properties of the organization will not yield insight into what the organization "is." In fact, Manning (1979, p. 46-47) states,

> ...the most serious omission of organizational action studies associated with the functionalist perspective (e.g., work of Blau, Heydebrand, Schoenherr, Meyer, et al.) is the lack of a clear explication of the process by which goals, formal procedures, or rules are translated into or transformed by organizational practices with the result of broadly defined rules emerging as narrowly defined procedures sanctioned as reasonable and proper organizational conduct.

In organizational life, the context, and expectancies for rule following is assumed within an established frame.

The genesis of the type of approach discussed here lies in several sources: the interactionism of G. H. Mead and the phenomenological interests of Schutz are some of the major precursors to contemporary thought. For our terms, however, there are four major derivations of this concept.

Goffman's (1974) Frame Analysis is perhaps the leading source for this style of thought. His perspective links subjective impressions with more objective principles, as the following shows (1974, p. 10):

> I assume that definition of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events -- at least social ones -- and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify.

Frame, for Goffman, involves the establishment of meaning in everyday situations; more than this, "it also organizes involvement" (p.345) and establishes the limits of behavior. The dramaturgical example is a favorite: consider how in a play the

actor's create a frame within whose limits they must operate; even though last night's performance terminated in the death of the culprit in Act IV, the culprit tonight must still act as if he does not know that his unhappy ending will be repeated: he must convincingly re-create frame. Similarly, the audience, perhaps knowledgeable about the outcome, adopts a frame that requires suspension of disbelief: in this way, even though we know the action is not real; we may still gasp at that outrageous outcome.

A variant of this concept lies in Basil Bernstein's development of framing (1975,ch. 5, but see, King, 1979). A bit were sociological in dimension, Bernstein offers the two related notions of "classification" and "framing". Bernstein's distinction is particularly useful for both organizational analysis and school analysis because he examines on the one hand "frames" and on the other, contents and then postulates a relationship between the two. Classification refers "to the degree of boundary maintenance between contents" (1975, V. 3, p. 88) and thus distinguishes areas of knowledge. These content areas, in a strongly classified system, will be quite discrete; in a weakly classified system, quite fluid. Frame refers "to the form of the context in which knowledge is transmitted and received. Frame refers to the specific pedagogical relationship of teacher and taught" (1975, v. 3, p. 88). One of Bernstein's interpreters suggests that "framing refers to all the processes of control over contents -- in short, to the power of the teacher and the pupil to transform the organization of the space, time, and setting in which these contents are taught" (Cherkaou, 1977, p. 559). This illustrates the more sociological definition given by Bernstein when discussing the concept of frame. Again, the relationships between actors in the frame can be weak or they can be strong: the frame, in other words,

can be easily broken or not. This in turn is related to Bernstein's presentation of two governing rules:

1. Things must be kept together;
2. Things must be kept apart.

The notion of frame enters into the selection of either rule. Rule 1 states that linkages and commonalities be established between frames; Rule 2 that linkages and commonalities be absent. The implications of this concept suggest that theorists examine to what degree organizations establish frames for operating by Rule 1 or Rule 2? and whether these rules appear in the everyday life of organizations, and if so, where? Does the office of the manager or the principal, for example, operate under rule 1 or rule 2? These questions suggest the possibility of looking at organizations not simply as monolithic structures but as interrelationships that operate according to changing and changeable perceptions. Bernstein's work in this regard provides us with a means for recognizing the way in which working relationships may be established which affect the way members perceive the "reality" of the organization.

Yet another variant of the concept is provided by Elkind (1979), who has been particularly influenced by Goffman's work. In fact, Elkind notes that Goffman's ideas on frame tend to parallel "deep" structures while Bernstein's tend to be "surface" structures. This is, of course, an important distinction which will be reappearing in our analysis of organizational frames. There, we hope to show that individual member frames which affect the conduct of the organization tend to be "deep" while the relationships-between-member frames, that is, the general organizational frame, is "surface."

Elkind (1979, p. 65) provides a fairly straightforward definition of framing:

> Frames are the set of implicit rules, expectancies, and understandings that regulate social behavior in repetitive situations.

His interest lies with developing an understanding of the genesis of frame creation in children, and to this end has provided a number of corollary constructs appropriate to the idea of framing. In his observations, many conducted in classroom settings, Elkind notes (1979, p. 136) different types of frames which occur:

> There are situational frames — such as hall, library, playground, lunchroom, principal's office. These are also person frames, such as those engendered by the 'visitor' or by the 'substitute' or by the 'new child in class.' And, there are activity frames, such as group discussion, reading, science, and math.

This illustrative list shows the variety of ways in which frames may be recognizable. In addition, one could recognize frame by the violation of frame. Elkind goes on to discuss spoiled frames, where expectancies were not met, frame switches, where difficulty arises when an individual is unable to switch into a new frame (such as carrying recess into the classroom) and frame clashes, where the cultural requirements necessary to participate in a frame are absent or different.

Elkind's approach tends to be the utilization of the concept of framing for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes, examining, for example, some of the strained relationships that can occur between adolescents and adults in terms of both framing and developmental levels. His version of the concept, however, demonstrates clearly how perceptions can differ if they occur in disparate frames that are part of the "baggage" that we all carry, and even carry into organizations.

A fourth valuable albeit indirect approach which parallels to a degree the work discussed previously is that of ethnomethodology, especially as developed by Bittner (1965), Garfinkel (1967) and Mehan and Wood (1975). This approach is informative because of its stress on several areas, e.g., the reflexivity of reality, the inquiry into normalization, and the fragility of ways of viewing the world. These methods form together to suggest — to ethnomethodologists, at least— the essential "fact" that there are multiple ways of seeing events. Our interpretative schema will obviously reflect the prejudices of culture in selecting the common meanings. Mehan and Wood (1975), for example, assert that meaningful behavior does not necessarily occur within the context of our means of describing it; that is, sociology (a description of social behavior) premises itself on the necessity of finding causal relationships, but "Unfortunately, when the logical requirements of causal relations and literal description are applied to social phenomena, they distort those phenomena" (Mehan and Wood, 1975, p. 64; see also, Apel, 1967). Their example of this are those studies of family size which assert economics to be the "cause" of number of children. But, in referring to Cicourel's work, they say that the concept of "having children" itself means different things to the researcher, the interviewee, and so on:

> 'Having children' means one thing to a virgin, another to the same woman during her pregnancy, yet another when she is giving birth -- still another when she is talking to an interviewer...

In what sense, then, does this "cause" induce meaningful interpretations of the effect? It stands, perhaps, only as a correlation with certain instances of the many meanings of "having children."

In fact, this may be overdrawn, inasfar as "economics" may be a second-level influence over procreation, one that does not necessarily enter as a direct factor in men - women interactions but may lurk at a more abstract, or secondary level, yet still in a weakened sense be a cause.

One of the issues which does appear in ethnomethodological analysis is concerned with the unit of analysis: while sociologist will look at the group response to whatever question is being aired, the ethnomethodologist tends to look at the individual construction that is part of the group response. An over-emphasis on either — the psychological or the social -- leads to distortions of both. Another way of saying this is to assert the proposition that reality is both objective facticity — that is, stable, and —subjective construction — that is, unstable, (cf. Berger and Luckmann, 1967). The individual interactions, subjective constructions, are in dialectical tension with the objective facticity, the organizational rules and requirements which outlive individual membership. It is primarily these latter that we wish to explore here.

Where the insights of ethnomethodologists helps us in the exploration is in pointing out this tension, for example, in underscoring the "etc., etc." nature of these rules and the social presumptions that must be made in order to understand them.

The Organization as a Unit of Analysis

In this paper, we are attempting to depart from traditional organizational analysis in the sense of describing activities in terms of formalized theory. The organization is being treated as if it were on the individual level of analysis — a unit composed of the frames of the powerful members but also a unit which projects its own frames. The danger of verification is obvious, yet there is

something to be said for examining what some scholars would call the 'climate' or the 'style' of an organization, terms which simply refer to the sum of the frames in use.

Organizational decisions, often made in conflict-ridden situations, represent the frame an organization brings to the situation. This is not unlike more traditional concepts in organizational theory. One such example is that organizations do not as units make decisions but establish for the decision-makers (individuals) the premises of those decisions (Simon, 1947; March and Simon, 1958; Perrow, 1979, esp. 148-153). In our view, an organizational frame emerges, and only decisions made in the context of this frame are appropriate. And, as Perrow so aptly points out (Ibid., p. 152-153), the basic premises of organizational life are taken-for-granted everyday realities.

> In the US, workers would have to violate the everyday premises that their organizations and the institutions outside of them constantly reinforce and reproduce if they were to demand, say, that occupants of all managerial positions be subject to direct election by their subordinates and required to run on announced policy platforms ....(Perrow, 1979, p. 152).

There may also be a connection with the later concept of fundamental ambiguity within organizations (Cohen, March and Olsen, 1976): "In particular, we often have underestimated the extent to which choice situations in organizations involve problematic goals, unclear technologies, and fluid participation." (Ibid., p. 25). Organizational structure seldom reflects the prescribed roles and the clear divisions that we tend to impute to it (Bittner, 1974) and this in part may be explained by frame clashes, frame switches and lack of knowledge of the organizational curriculum (Foster, 1980). It also reflects the organizational equivalent of indexicality (Mehan and Wood, 1975): that rules and other symbol-

ic forms are incomplete and only point to what must be added (Ibid., p. 90). In our terminology, the contents of the frame are indistinct and need be understood as pointers to other frames and situations.

The concepts suggest that organizations reflect both the institutionalization of collective individual frames and the ambiguity of collective individuals frames. Organizations, like individuals, can be studied through an analyses of the shared frames. The organization then becomes an important unit of analysis. Much of the work done with frames and in ethnomethodology deals with the atypical: heroin rings, primitive rites, "con" games, sexual codes and so on; however, by applying the methodology of the unordinary to the analysis of the typical, perhaps we can then better understand the ways in which the ubiquitous modern organization often structures the way we think and serves to provide permanency in a flux-ridden world. One way to approach this study is through breaching procedures: looking at organizations taken out of the routine and threatened with major changes in their operation. In such situations, organizations could react in a number of different ways; how they do react -- or, more appropriately, how their reactions are interpreted in the context of this theoretical frame -- is the subject of this case study. The methodology attempts to reconstruct the attitudes and culture of the past through interviews and analysis of archival data.

## II. The Case: Background and Description

This case involves a metropolitan - area desegregation decision handed down in 1976 and implemented in 1978. The cast of characters includes 11 autonomous school districts, the federal court structure, the state school board and black and white area residents. In order to focus more adequately on the theoretical aspects of the case, the names of the involved areas have been deleted.

Background Data

1. Population Characteristics.

The County is 435 square miles in area; the City is 15 square miles. In 1970, the County's population was 386,000, up from the 172,000 recorded in 1950. The City's population in 1970, however, was 80,000 while twenty years earlier it had been 110,000. Yet, the black population of the City had in this period gone from 15% of the total to 44%, while the suburban areas, never a haven [redacted], declined, from 6.4% to 4.5%, in black population. The school population showed a similar, if more marked, trend, as these figures show:

| | | City | Surburban County |
|---|---|---|---|
| % Black | 1954 | 28% | 4% |
| School | 1964 | 57% | 6% |
| Population | 1973 | 83% | 6% |

While the City was losing overall population, it was gaining a greater proportional number of blacks. At the same time, however, there was an overall decline in the number of whites in the school system. While the population in the City was in an approximate 55-45 white-black ratio, the school population was in an approximate 20-80 white-black ratio.

2. Previous Segregation.

At one point in this state's history, there was only one high school in the county that accepted blacks, and it was in the City. This, obviously, involved some cross-district travel by young black students. Additionally, black children outside of the City were often sent into the City to attend "colored" elementary and middle schools. After desegregation had begun in the City itself, the school board there had adopted a policy of allowing optional attendance zones

in the city schools, so that whites could transfer from their neighborhood school to a more "compatible" city school. This, however, left a proportionately larger number of blacks in certain schools, probably affecting the movement of white families either into or out of the city.

3. Other Factors.

One of the influential factors affecting the legal case was the discriminatory practice on the part of the Real Estate Commission (a state-licensed operation) which suggested that neighborhood property values be maintained by not introducing members of races or nationalities who may lower those values. Similarly, when public housing was built, it was uniformly built within city limits, with the consequence of concentrating poor and minority groups in the city.

On a state-wide basis, there had been passed two statutes which also affected the school systems. One was a transportation bill which authorized funds for the transportation of private school pupils. In its final form, it allowed for the inter-district transportation of private school pupils, thus making it considerably easier for whites in the City to attend suburban private schools.

The other statute was one passed in 1968 and which allowed the State Board to consolidate school districts in order to streamline the Balkanized system. Specifically excluded, however, was the City school district, an action done to preserve historical boundaries but one which also served to isolate 75% of the County's black children in the City, a result found to violate equal opportunity provisions.

Despite a concurrent decision in Detroit where the Supreme Court applied a rather stringent test to metropolitan-area desegregation decrees, the Court in this case found that inter-district segregative effects were indeed present, and

and that some kind of metropolitan remedy — requiring the merger of 11 autonomous school districts into one large meta-district was required. The possibilities included voluntary compliance, inter-district reorganization, and mandatory assignment. The voluntary plan was the first dismissed. It (the major one--several had been submitted) dealt with the creation of "magnet" schools located in each of five attendance zones carved out of the City and surrounding suburbs and approximating the racial make-up of the county as a whole. Although in the rest of the country such "magnet" schools have had wide appeal (though, perhaps, less success), the court here asserted that they would have only limited drawing-power. The special efforts required by their attendees gave little assurance of accomplishing the massive desegregation efforts envisioned by the court.

The mandatory reassignment plans were also considered. They fell into two sub-categories: centering and clustering. The cluster plans would require busing school children (for the State Board, a "bankrupt" idea) across district lines to either city or suburban schools which had previously been "clustered" or partnered. The center plans took a different tack. There, children in grades 1-6 would attend their neighborhood school for four days; one day a week would be set aside for their attendance at a desegregated, racially balanced "center," where they would receive instruction in such subjects as art and physical education, chosen presumable because of their positive connotations in promoting friendship and cohesiveness. All seventh graders would go to city schools (the City, in other words, would only have elementary neighborhood schools and metropolitan seventh grades) and all eighth to twelfth graders would attend suburban schools.

Both strategies were disapproved. The center plan in particular had a number of flaws. It removed from the city all secondary schools, thus requiring present high school teachers in the City to either relocate or convert to seventh grade teaching. For elementary children, the part-time desegregation effort was deemed inadequate. But, both plans shared what the court saw as a major failing: they kept intact the district system, thus requiring substantial inter-district cooperation and placing the court itself in the position of adjucating any disputes. This would amount to court supervision of the educational process, requiring, for example, judicial involvement in disputes over curricular offerings or textbook choices. This clearly would be frowned on by higher courts.

This left the presentation of the final option, a variation of which was later adopted as "the" plan. Several reorganization plans were put forth, including one developed by the State Board and supported by all but one of the suburbs. This maverick district, mostly black, submitted its own variation. The State Board-Caesar surveying Gaul-- split the City into five parts, each to merge with one or more suburban districts so that only five school districts, rather than eleven, would be established in Northern New Castle County. The black suburb next to the City suggested, however, that the entire county be reorganized into one single district, to be divided into four "attendance zones." Each zone would have an appointed group set up to advise a new, county-wide elected school board.

An interesting turn now takes place in the case. Having requested and received a variety of desegregation strategies, the court decides to reject them all because, first, the voluntary and reassignment plans did not meet the requirements the court had established and, secondly, the freezing of district lines required in accepting either of the reorganization plans would be considered unwarranted judicial "meddling" in the legislative process. This somewhat-after-the-

fact approach was taken primarily because of the heavy sword of Milliken; certain educational matters were better left to the political process.

Having said this, however, the court went on to propose an interim plan of its own, taking with modifications the one-district plan proposed by the black suburban district. This plan was adopted only temporarily in order to allow the state legislature an opportunity to come up with its own remedy. The catch was that no remedy would be judicially acceptable unless it met court-imposed requirements, i.e., no plans similar to those already rejected would be approvable.

A single, unitary district was thus ordered, collapsing eleven old districts into a new, almost-county wide metropolitan district. One area, the furthest from the City and not quite a likely candidate for consideration as part of the city-suburb community, was excluded. This left, however, the problem of disestablishing eleven school boards, eleven superintendencies and their attendant administrative apparatus, eleven teachers' unions and contracts, and eleven processes of education. In their place arose the Interim Board, a five-member unit (later increased through legislative action to 13; later again decreased by court-action back to five) charged with the design and implementation of multi-racial schools. And all of this temporary, depending on the willingness and/or ability of the legislature, openly hostile to the court's efforts, to come up with something better.

A number of further developments took place in the case, including various appeals at various levels, some stalling tactics on the part of different agencies, and selection of a remedy. In this last instance, the northern section of the county was declared the school district, and four attendance zones were established, allowing the City to send its children into the suburbs (9 years) and the suburbs to bus children into the city (3 years). Metropolitanism was formally implemented in September of 1978.

III. Framing:

Consider the individual and organizational problems inherent in the dissolution of eleven school districts: superintendencies must be eliminated, boards fired, teacher unions placated, tax rates re-established, school plants changed, principals reassigned, students and parents informed. This breaching of organizational continuity resulted in the thematization of what usually would be background frames - unstated rules and expectations somehow agreed upon by the organizational membership. This section is a discussion of such frames.

The "actors" in this case were numerous: the defendants, the school districts, the judiciary, the state legislature, the various involved boards and a number of public interest groups. Each was operating within a series of rules and expectancies, or frameworks, about the defined situtation. These organizational frames can be classed into a number of categories, generally oriented around the questions "who is involved?" and "can what is happening happen?" In a situation such as this, Bernstein's two "rules" of operation quite clearly apply: in certain instances, organizations ask that "things be kept together," in others, that "things be kept apart."

Belief frames and sovereignty. This frame reflects a basic feature of organizational reality - that an identity be maintained for that organization. Two sub-categories occur in these frames: one, those school districts with individual loyalties, which were righteous in their recognition of the injustice of it all; and those districts which appeared to be switching between differently interpreted frames. This occured when a sub-frame - that of constituency - became conscious. In the first districts, the organizational constituency was always obvious: the geography of the districts allowed for district boundaries composed of identifiable interest groups. The organization could strongly frame whom it served: in certain instances, an upper middle class constituency and in others a lower-middle, working class one. The school districts here developed, in response to the litigation, a

posture that fought the proposed idea of developing a single, metropolitan area system. This protectionist attitude had its roots in what was identified as the organization's community: those neighborhoods distinguished from other such neighborhoods by an imaginary line which set out the district boundaries. The majority of the suburban communities were overwhelmingly white, and there was a great deal of opposition to the idea of cross - district bussing.[1] Thus, the term "neighborhood school" began to serve as a slogan for solidifying the community frame, as this item from a school district workshop memorandum recommends:

> G. Allow those students who wish to do so to transfer voluntarily so as to cut down on the numbers forced to leave the neighborhood school.

It is to be expected then that a school district, threatened with extinction, would form a defense against consolidation, and, further, present itself in a frame which is defensible to its community. Whether this frame is also defensible in long-range social policy terms is debatable.

But what about a suburban district which did not argue for separateness, which, in fact, developed and presented a one-district metropolitan plan to the court? How could one explain this anomaly, given our expectations that the rule governing autonomy should prevail. Again, it relates to the frame in use. This district bordered on the City, was economically poor, and had a high percentage of blacks in its population. Its community was financially marginal, and therefore the district, looking to its wealthier neighbors, stood to benefit from a consolidation. This is not to say that a conscious and rational decision was made on utilitarian grounds, but only that these background factors "colored" the options open to the district: given competing news of the situation at hand, could a largely black, financially straddled district make a serious plea for preventing a desegregation plan?

Characteristics of the suburban district frames generally tended to include such features as the autonomy of relationships and the rule of separateness. In this view, the school district could present itself as an independent entity whose existence was ideologically justifiable under the rubric of local control. It was physically and emotionally separate from all other districts, indeed, competed with them for prestige and resources. The clients were neighborhood clients and the spirit was of a closely-knit community. X percentage of our students go on to college, do well on CATS, field state champions and so on. Accepting these premises, would not one be hard pressed not to agree? Perhaps, unless, as the court did, this framework was broken and another one substituted, a larger picture of what should or should not be included in the frame. The legal frame said this: our community is the county - you live in the suburbs but may work in the city; you live in the city but may shop in the suburbs; you have frequent access to all parts of the county and this county is your community. The very idea of "community"may be considered in a number of ways; two of the more important are political and psychological. A political framework looks at the established boundaries and uses these to differentiate one "community" from another. Here, the leading concept is that of sovereignty -- the notion of isolation and independence. School districts must be considered as such sovereign independencies. The importance of boundary lines per se is stressed by the courts (see Milliken[2]). The idea of community here is a "building block" one: smaller units, each district and separate, joined together to form larger ones, finally the states and nation, but yet each retaining its own identity.

The notion of community may also be considered psychologically. This framework indeed maintains its own boundaries, but these are not fixed ones - they shift relative to the holder and are more quickly affected by changing economic and demographic patterns. Essentially, the community becomes something created out of the shared perceptions of its members. A "community" in this case can be larger, or

smaller, than a given political unit, this is the conception that this court worked with. Underlying much of its analysis was the consideration that the county itself had become the dominant community in question. Increased mobility provided by the automobile, frequent residential movements, county-wide media and home-work commuting streams all suggested that the idea of an isolated and sovereign municipal division was not in fact a psychological frame. The court's logic appeared to reflect Rist's (1978, p. 277) observation that "with one out of every four families moving each year, the notion of 'neighborhood' as a long-term place where one puts down roots and establishes 'community' seems spurious."

The adoption of one or the other view of the community in question - strictly political or mostly psychological - has in turn significance for the interpretation of whatever facts are presented for consideration. For example, in this case the state statute consolidating districts was found unconstitutional. The statute had excepted school districts with over 12,000 pupils from the consolidation, thus excluding the City district, an historically legitimate and autonomous district coterminous with city boundary lines. The court, additionally, could find no racial motivation behind the legislation; it was essentially a piece of work designed to ease school administration and management. Yet, by treating only the established political boundaries it had the effect of confining blacks to black city schools, an outcome of residential patterns. Only by accepting the psychological frame, could this "confinement" be considered an unconstitutional one. That is, considering the municipal boundaries as sovereign, the city schools would have been majority black for essentially de facto reasons - economics and private racism. However, by ignoring the established sovereignty and examining the area as a psychological whole, then the confinement of black children to one section, abetted by a state law, must be seen in de jure terms. Only then could the pattern of segregation be viewed as an interdistrict one because of the state actions.

It is possible, of course, to imagine a situation where in a school board,

conscious of its duty to develop a non-racist society, would say that indeed the boundaries should be changed and that our various systems should be integrated in both meanings of that word. This, however, would require breaking frame, breaking, in a sense, a meta-frame since a number of other frames about the world are contained therein. Such a procedure of breaking this meta-frame would also violate rules about class, status and social relationships. Thus, Cataldo, et al. (1978, p. 39) have noted that

> Because blacks continue to cluster toward the bottom of the status hierarchy, desegregation results not only in an influx of black children into the white child's environment but also an influx of predominantly lower-class children into an essentially middle-class environment. Consequently school desegregation jeopardizes the maintenance of status inequalities as it increases opportunities for social relations between higher and lower-status children.

This, in turn, affects the highly local orientation of suburban areas (Fischer, et al., 1977, p. 138) and the maintenance of communal values and ties. Besher (1962, p. 125) observes that

> We know that the location of social characteristics can be predicted in terms of a stratification theory, especially in terms of social distance, and we also know that location itself is a determinant of the subsequent social relationships that will make up the future stratification system.

In other words, a particular stratification system requires a degree of "social distance;" geographical residence will affect the type of relationships that communities and individuals engage in. The choice of marriage partners, for example, will be highly correlated with both class and locality. A traditional frame about the organization in the community is therefore established and is continually reinforced by the members of the organization whose sense of identity depends on boundary maintenance. When the identified community transcends organizational

barriers, then frame ambiguity results.

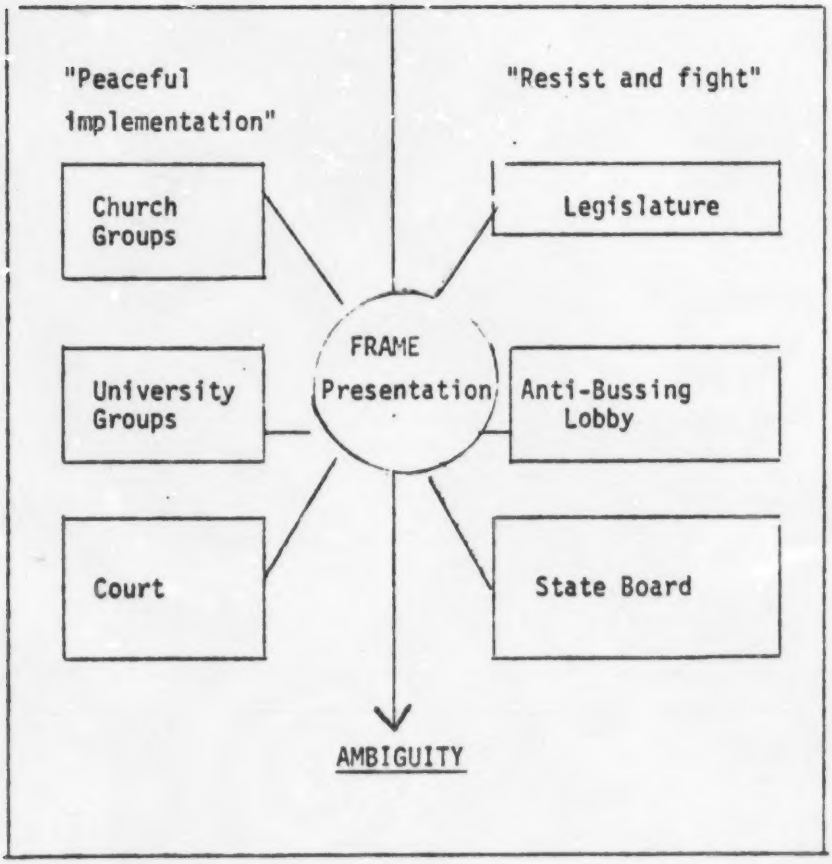
Frame Tugs

The notion of framing includes within the concept of presentation to the world, so that, for example, the con-artist, spying his victim, attempts to establish a conspirational frame with his victim within which he presents himself not as a con-artist but as, perhaps, an innocent bystander. Organizations also must do this, but of course we hope not for the same reason. Oil companies are notable for their attempts to present themselves in frameworks that belie the critical assessments of industry outsiders: e.g., the company as victim. But when a situation arises where because of the nature of this frame held by the public of the organization is a morally - bound one, then there may arise "tugs-of-war" between the possible frames the organization wishes to present. Consider this news item:

> When interviewed about his assessment of the recent desegregation decree, the Superintendent remarked that his district was against the acceptance of large numbers of black children into the district schools when they had their own perfectly acceptable schools.

This item, of course, is a plant designed to illustrate that the organization and its management is expected to maintain a morally appropriate frame no matter individual values; a superintendent who did in fact say something like the above would be breaking this frame, with disastrous consequences for his career. This is fairly straightforward, but consider now the situation that arises when differing moral frames are assumed for the district by different moral agencies. The school district must attempt to present itself to both frames, becomes involved in a tug, and of consequence becomes ambiguous in its positions and actions.

In this case study, this occured with the majority of defendant districts. This sketch illustrates the position the districts found themselves in:




On the one side, the legislature bitterly fought the development of the decree, at one point having the House pass a bill calling for the firing and/or imprisonment of federal judges who "exceed" their constitutional authority.

A anti-bussing group, the Positive Action Committee, was an influential lobbying force with the legislature and at times a political force in its own right, coalescing parent groups to fight against inter-district bussing of children. Indeed, this group developed its own slogans to bring its message to the forefront: "It's time to wake up, folks" served to establish a frame of imminent danger to constitutional rights. The State Board was also able to place a good deal of pressure on local

districts by consistently fighting or delaying the court order. Its several appeals over several years and its reluctance to take any positive action reinforced the conviction held by most of the defendants that the order would in fact be overturned. In a friend of the court brief filed with related cases, the State Board agreed that the lower courts "have gone demonstrably beyond the proper scope of any equitable remedy in a school desegregation case." The State Board's remedy, however, a version of volunteer transfer, was branded by the court here as being totally inequitable, assigning "to those who have been wronged the responsibility of correcting those wrongs."

On the other side of the districts' quandry were those church, university, and business groups that were interested primarily in resolving the issue as the court saw fit. These groups were widely regarded as being pro-bussing even though their major ideological position was concerned with peaceful implementation.

In between both sides, and caught in its own ambiguity, lay the interim, court-appointed school board. Of the five members, three were closely aligned with the suburbs, one with the city and one was a suburban maverick. A unusual number of frame clashes occured at this level, for example:

> Board member A: "Some people will play to the press or to the public. We've got two of them on our board."
>
> Board member B: "If I were playing to the galleries, I'd have taken plenty of positions selling out. . . ."
> (Newspaper story)

The impression is that member A has framed two of the other members as not being team members, as exposing what should in fact remain private. The context of this is exactly that: two of the members were calling for completely open board meetings, threatening to call in the enforcers of the state's "sunshine" legislation. The other members considered this as an infringement on their ability to "get things done," and, in fact, consorted with each other in the men's room to apparently prevent at least one other member, a woman, entry into the discussions. Item:

Board member B: "I understand they concocted (a specific proposal) in the bathroom before we went out on the floor.

Board member C: "All three were in the bathroom at the same time, but I didn't call a meeting." (Newspaper story)

This is also an example of how space frames our notions of activities: a "bathroom meeting," while indeed a meeting, violates our frame of where meetings should occur.

What is significant about this uneasy alliance between the board members was that the overall frame applied to their actions was always given in terms of promoting the general welfare of the student population. Thus, when opposing closed meetings, the maverick member could claim, "God, we're talking about people's kids. I think they have a right to know where they will be going to school" and another member could attack the board as well from this vantage: "There has been somewhat of an arrogance, a public-bedamned arrogance on the part of the majority of the board." Yet the leader of the majority could use the same justification for their actions: "We don't want (the majority of students) going to church basement schools."

Even now, in interviewing members of what is technically one school system, the old frames about who one is in what system are persistent and this is a factor of the reluctance of the previous organizations and their hierarchy, such as the interim Board, to be able to make clear transitions between old and new frames. Today there is a good deal of wishful rememberance about the quality and identity of the former districts and a certain disdain and mistrust about the new one. These loyalties even seem to persist among the new hierarchy, and so if the persistent frames cannot be broken at that level, then it is perhaps not reasonable to expect organizational members in general to adopt new frames.

Taken together, the activities of the parties involved indicate that frames are ways of interpreting events; that by framing it will generally be meant the means of organizing thoughts according to some inbuilt cultural system. This is apparent in organizations as well as individuals, particularly in view of the recent thought in organizational theory that it is individuals not organizations who have goals and objectives; that organizations per se are not comprehending "beings." The sum of the frames of the powerful individuals in the organization will generally determine the particular set of organizational frames that will be communicated to the membership at large, and which then become a part of that membership's way of organizing reality. In this particular case, one of the items which stands out in stark relief is the membership's need for continuity within the organization: the need in a sense for frames to be uninterrupted. Thus, when the "new" districts were formed, the organizational structure paralleled closely -- and naturally -- the "old" structure; rather than establishing new organizational titles, the old titles were maintained, with now an "area" superintendent, for example, in place of the old school district superintendency. This led to a number of charges by the press and public of administrative overload, or the placing in the new consolidated district of the all of the positions previously contained in the separate districts, a charge completely justified but explainable by the need for frame continuity. As an organization, there appeared the need to re-establish structure; to have a sense of control over this hostile environment. The need for structure again was purely justifiable; however, many members of the school organization were unable to break the previous frames by considering the needs of the new structure. The result was operating within the old frames as to what constituted the efficaceous school district--in terms of concentration on "college prep" subjects, and so on--and the consequent and unfortunate re-segregation of blacks within the school

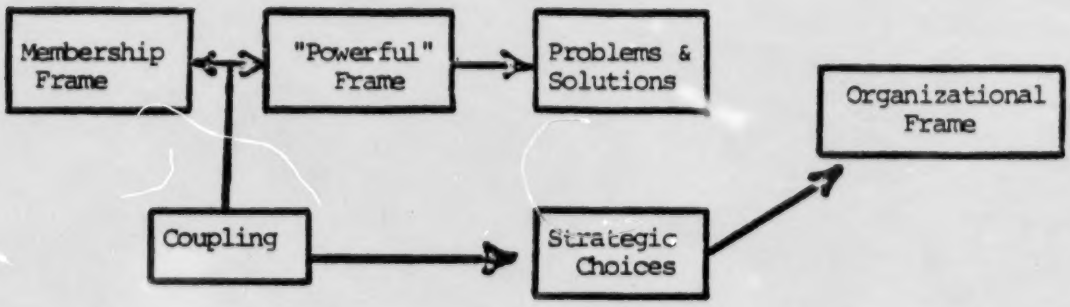
system, so much so that many reading and other groups were comprised mainly of blacks, prompting one City official to comment on the fact of "what are they teaching down there (in the home economics class), Southern cooking?"

In some interviews garnered later, there appeared to be distinct efforts made to reconciliate disparate frames, to develop perhaps multiple frames for use in considering the different organizational necessities of different structures. Thus I found a number of principals and other administrators could conceptually appreciate the particular rationale and obligations of the court system, without necessarily agreeing with the need for such "drastic" measures as had been taken. There was indeed an appreciation of the political realities influencing the need for the various parties to bring litigation and for the courts to decide it, but also an unwillingness to totally accept the various edicts as being the right ones. The considerably high turnover among school administrative staff (including some who went on to work in both private and "Christian" schools) witnesses the fact that many could not make these frame transitions.

The development of organizational frames which establish rules and expectancies is a concept that can be placed within several strands of organizational thought. One is the "garbage can" decision making theory of March and Olsen (1976) where problems and solutions are jumbled together. Rather than accept the chance-like nature of this concept, it could be suggested that between problem and solution lies the mediating power of organizational frames. A problem, for example, is only such when perceived in a context bounded by a frame; likewise, solutions may only be apparent when breaking frame (see Szilsak, 1978). Each frame contributes to the selection and validation of what count as problems within the organization; thus, in this case, perhaps the dominant frame was one of "maintenance of identity," and this in turn affected whatever else was identified as problematic. Cohen, March and Olsen (1976, p. 26) find, for example, that "In a garbage can situation, a decision is an outcome or an interpretation of several relatively independent 'streams' within an organization." But, in this analysis it would be argued that these streams are the organizationally jumbled mixture of frames which have been developed by the basic culture and psychology of the power wielders and the interaction of the organization with the environment.

The effect of different frames would apparently be a factor of the degree of "coupling" (Weick, 1976) in the organization. In a highly centralized structure, those in power would intentionally or not spread their frame constructions throughout the organization — through identifying problems, setting problems and so on. In the type of educational organizations we have been discussing, there is a greatly enhanced chance of frame disputes and frame tugs, both at the higher levels and at the building level. In fact, where there is a high degree of sharing frames, educators would be likely to claim a "good climate".

A final perspective on this issue may be developed by placing frame analysis in the context of the notion of strategic choice as developed by Child (1972) and Chandler (1962, 1967). Child (1972, p. 15) suggests that strategic choice as made by the "dominant coalition" is the "critical variable in a theory of organizations." This suggests that the powerful actors both react to and influence their organization's environment by engaging in weighted decision-making, i.e., decisions made in the context of the variables of size, technology, policy demands, etc. Again, however, the decisions made will be made in the context of an organizational frame -- or interpretation of the need for funding a "normal form" (Mehan and Wood, 1975, p. 101). Thus, in retrospect, a simple chart can be developed to show these relationships:




In this case, the coupling mechanisms were loosely defined within the system and thus the tightly defined court system could impose its own framework on the systemic "problems can" of the educational network. The result, however, lay in competitive frames developing within the system and the re-alignment of

power coalitions. As these begin to coalesce, however, a dominant organizational frame developed, presenting the system as a county-wide organization. This itself became problematic, insofar as the sheet size of the system posed a threat to the institutionalized state department and other smaller systems in the state. The current status of the case, now in litigation, is to dissolve the one district and create four smaller ones — each, supposedly, to engage anew in frame wars. Over time, these disputes being settled, the organizational structure(s) can assert itself again as a dominant frame within which members must live: "...in the longer time perspective, actors become less 'visible' but their frames of meaning, the product of their structuring, more determinate: constituted structures have become constitutive" (Ranson, Hinings and Greenwood, 1980, p. 14).

## NOTES

1. The data gathered for this paper came from several sources: court records (Evans v. Buchanan, 379 F. Supp., 1218, 1974; 393 F. Supp., 428, 1975; 416 F. Supp., 328, 1976; 447 F. Supp., 982, 1978; 455 F. Supp., 692 (1978); 587 F. 2d. 750, 1978); newspapers (Philadelphia Inquirer, Wilmington Morning News, Wilmington Evening Journal); Jeffrey Raffel and Barry Morstain, "School Desegregation in the Wilmington Metropolitan Area: The Dynamics of Power and Ideology in the Educational Arena," mimeo report, College of Urban Affairs and Public Policy, University of Delaware, 1978; and unstructured interviews with school personnel involved in administration and teaching.
2. Milliken v. Bradley, 418 U. S. 717, 94 S. Ct. 3112, L. Ed., 2d 1069 (1974).

REFERENCES

Aldrich, Howard E. Organizations and Environments. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1979.

Apel, Karl Otto. Analytic Philosophy of Language and the Geisteswissenschaften, trans. H. Holstelilie. Dordrecht, Holland, D. Reidel and Co., 1967.

Benson, J. Kenneth. "Innovation and Crisis in Organizational Analysis," in J. K. Benson, ed., Organizational Analysis: Critique and Innovation. Beverly Hills: Sage Publishing Co., 1977.

Berger, Peter L. and Thomas Luckmann. The Social Construction of Reality. New York: Anchor Books, 1967

Bernstein, Basil. Class, Codes and Control, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, v. 3, 1975.

Beshars, James M. Urban Social Structure. New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1962.

Bittner, Egon. "The Concept of Organization," Social Research, 32: 239-255, 1965

Blau, Peter and W. Richard Scott. Formal Organizations. Scranton, PA: Chandler.

Cataldo, Everett; Michael Giles and Douglas Gatlin. School Desegregation Policy. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1978.

Chandler, Alfred. Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of Industrial Enterprise. Cambridge, Mass.: M. I. T. Press., 1962.

_____. The Large Industrial Corporation and the Making of the Modern American Economy. In S. E. Ambrose, ed., Institutions in Modern America: Innovation in Structure and Process. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1967.

Cherkaoui, Mohamed. "Bernstein and Durkheim: Two Theories of Change in Educational Systems," Harvard Educational Review, 47: 556-564, 1977.

Child, John. "Organizational Structure, Environment and Performance: the Role of Strategic Choice. Sociology 6:1-22, 1972.

Elkind, David. Child and Society. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1979.

Etzioni, Amitau. Modern Organizations. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1964.

Foster, William. "The Adjacent Curriculum and the School Organization." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Boston, 1980.

Fischer, Claude; David Reynolds and Stein Rokkan. Locational Approaches to Power and Conflict. New York: John Wiley, 1974.

Garfinkel, Harold. Studies in Ethnomethodology. New York: Prentice-Hall, 1967,

Goffman, Erving. Frame Analysis. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Hannan, M. T. and J. Freeman. "The Population Ecology of Organizations." The American Journal of Sociology 82: 929-965, 1977.

Heydebrand, Wolf. "Organizational Contradictions in Public Bureaucracies: Toward a Marxian Theory of Organizations," In J. K. Benson, ed., Organizational Analysis, ibid., 1977.

Imersheim, Alan. Organizational Change as a Paradigm Shift. In J.K. Benson, ed., Organizational Analysis, ibid., 1977.

Katz, Daniel and Robert Kahn. The Social Psychology of Organizations. New York: Wiley, 1966.

King, Ronald. "The Search for the Invisible Pedagogy" Sociology 13: 445-458, 1979.

Kuhn, Thomas. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967.

Manning, Peter K. "Rules in Organizational Context," in J. K. Benson, ed., Organizational Analysis, ibid., 1977.

March, James and Johan Olsen. Ambiguity and Choice in Organizations. Bergen, Norway: Universitetsforlaget, 1976.

March, James and Herbert Simon. Organizations. New York: Wiley, 1958.

Mehan, Hugh and Houston Wood. The Reality of Ethnomethodology. New York: Wiley, 1975.

Miner, John. Management Theory. New York: Macmillan, 1971.

Perrow, Charles. Complex Organizations: A Critical Essay, 2nd ed. Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1979.

Ranson, Steward, Bob Hinings and Royston Greenwood. "The Structuring of Organizational Structures," Administrative Science Quarterly 25: 1-17, 1980.

Rist, Roy. The Invisible Children: School Integration in American Society. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1978.

Silverman, David. The Theory of Organizations. New York: Basic Books, 1971.

Simon, Herbert. Administrative Behavior, 2nd ed. New York: The Free Press, 1965.

Szilak, Dennis. "Strings: A Critique of Systematic Education," Harvard Educational Review 46: 54-74, 1976.

Turner, Stephen. "Blau's Theory of Differentiation: Is it Explanatory?," in J. K. Benson, ed., Organizational Analysis, ibid., 1977.

Weick, Karl. "Educational Organizations as Loosely Coupled Systems," Administrative Science Quarterly 21: 1-19.